

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 285 269

EA 019 613

AUTHOR Sigmon, Scott B.
TITLE A Contrast in Schooling: The Natural Education of Emile vs. Giroux's Radical Education.
PUB DATE 84
NOTE 12p.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Comparative Analysis; Cultural Context; Educational Philosophy; Elementary Secondary Education; *Foundations of Education; Humanistic Education; Ideology; *Literary Criticism; Political Influences; *Role of Education; Social Influences; *Social Theories; Student School Relationship; *Theory Practice Relationship
IDENTIFIERS Curriculum Theories; Emile; *Giroux (Henry); Radical Critical Theory; *Rousseau (Jean Jacques)

ABSTRACT

Jean-Jacques Rousseau's classic work "Emile" of 1762 is contrasted with Henry G. Giroux's 1981 book "Ideology Culture and the Process of Schooling." Although both Giroux and Rousseau are social critics, their notions about education and its outcome are contrary and not due to historical time alone. This comparative analysis characterizes Rousseau's "natural" education as individual, sheltered, and "bourgeois"; Giroux's "radical" education, on the other hand, emphasizes consciousness of ideology and group improvement. Another major difference is that Emile was kept historically naive. Giroux refers to Rousseau as "a radical humanist thinker in terms of his strategy-based educational position." This critique, however, agrees with Giroux's major point that curriculum, itself, is never neutral except in isolation. Rousseau's more male-oriented, individual-centered position would be appreciated by economic libertarian individuals who oppose governmental interference in education and taxation for support of public education. For the radical, pedagogy includes individual freedom and social reconstruction. The more practical approach of educating the individual within the group disavows bias against females, social class, or ethnicity. (CJH)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

ED285269

A CONTRAST IN SCHOOLING:
THE NATURAL EDUCATION OF EMILE VS. GIROUX'S RADICAL EDUCATION

Scott B. Sigmon
Irvington, NJ, Public Schools

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official
OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Scott B
Sigmon

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Irvington Public Schools
c/o Scott B. Sigmon, School Psychologist
Special Services Department
1150 Springfield Ave.
Irvington, NJ 07111

1984
2

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

EA 019 613

ABSTRACT

Jean-Jacques Rousseau's classic work Emile of 1762 is contrasted with Henry G. Giroux's recent book Ideology Culture & The Process of Schooling of 1981. Even though both Giroux and Rousseau are social critics, their notions about education and its outcome are contrary and not just due to historical time alone. This writer characterizes Rousseau's "natural" education as individual, sheltered, and "bourgeois"; while Giroux's "radical" education emphasizes consciousness of ideology plus group improvement. Another major difference is that Emile was kept historically naive. Giroux refers to Rousseau as 'a radical humanist thinker in terms of his strategy-based educational position'; but this author agrees with Giroux's major point in that curriculum, itself, is never neutral except in isolation.

A Contrast In Schooling: The Natural Education of Emile¹ vs. Giroux's Radical Education²

The writings of Rousseau and Giroux clearly demonstrate that they saw serious problems within the societies in which they lived. (Giroux will be referred to in the past tense in reference to what he has written, but he is a living contemporary writer.) Rousseau wrote that: "Everything is good as it leaves the hands of the author of things; everything degenerates in the hands of man."³ Giroux's contempt for the ruling establishment is almost totally expressed via educational terms, I quote him as follows:

Reduced to a perspective that gave priority to questions of efficiency, management and prediction, educational research surrendered its capacity to question and challenge the basic imperatives of the dominant society to a functionalist ideology fuelled by the politically conservative principles of social harmony and normative consensus. Within the functionalist perspective there was little room for educators to raise questions concerning the relationship between critical concepts such as ideology, power, and class struggle and their relationship to the process of schooling.⁴

People who want to bring about major changes, often because they do not feel an institution or society is just, are called radicals. Giroux is clearly a radical as evidenced by his writings. For his time, Rousseau was also - so much so that his own writings placed his physical well-being in jeopardy. Giroux even refers to Rousseau as a radical humanist thinker (in terms of his strategy-based educational position, along with Wilhelm Reich,

A. S. Neil, Carl Rogers and Erich Fromm),⁵ but Rousseau is today often seen from a social philosophical point of view as the first major liberal writer as well as the father of humanistic education.

Both Giroux and Rousseau saw the tension between education for individual edification and social reconstruction, but they believe that the proper type of education will ultimately improve the social relations of mankind. Rousseau felt that education for the individual's sake should occur up to approximately the age of 15-years, away from city, and somewhat likened to the "savage". Rousseau wrote:

Attached to no place, without prescribed task, obeying no one, with no other law than his will, he is forced to reason in each action of his life. He does not make a movement, not a step, without having beforehand envisaged the consequences. Thus the more his body is exercised, the more his mind is enlightened; his strength and his reason grow together, and one is extended by the other.⁶

However, as D. H. Dobinson believes, Rousseau finished "Emile" by having produced a type of education which will shape:

...the way we are going to live, for shaping our attitude toward violence, towards wars, towards our relationships with all other human beings, towards humanity at large, and even towards all other living creatures.⁷

Giroux stressed individualistic thinking as demonstrated by his emphasis on 'encouragement of self-reflection'; but unlike Rousseau, Giroux's major stated purpose is to deliberately improve society. Different also from Giroux, is that "Rousseau does not really resolve the tension between the individual and authority";⁸ and so Rousseau's fence-straddling liberal leanings become apparent.

To Rousseau, education is "the march of nature",⁹ and "the education of man begins at his birth".¹⁰ Furthermore, "in the quest for the laws of nature always begin with the phenomena most common and most accessible to the senses and accustom your pupil to take these phenomena not for reasons but for facts".¹¹ Hence, it can be seen that Rousseau emphasizes natural development, stresses nature, and what I call a "natural education": teaching the student what he should know at the proper stage of development. The book "Emile" is divided into 5 sections, each following the previous one according to sequential stages of development. Rousseau felt that certain things are done at each stage to properly educate the pupil, according to what nature will allow. Book I or stage 1 is infancy and 'active learning' is stressed here. Book II is about boyhood, sharpening the senses and "negative education" (the best education is the least education because we are born good and get corrupted by society); e.g., 'it is a ridiculous error for children under twelve to study history, which is within their grasp, because it is merely a collection of facts.' Book III - the approach of adolescence or preadolescence - is concerned with scientific studies such as geography and physics, the game of "Robinson Crusoe" (the only book Emile was allowed to read), and the topic of a trade. Also, the transition from negative to positive education occurs here. This period, from about 12 to 15, is considered the ideal time for learning because here innate strength is greater than the source of weakness, desire; i.e., "...the inequality between his strength and desires".¹² Rousseau wanted the education of the

child between the ages of 2 and 15 to be dependent on nature, not on other people's will. Rousseau is the personification of nature as Emile's tutor who shaped Emile's behavior via natural consequences or conditions, not by social rewards. The tutor leads rather than instructs. This way the tutee also gains freedom by knowing limits.

Rousseau was not interested in how much Emile knows; but whatever he does know, he has to know it very well, himself. The lessons of Book III are: how to learn how to learn, to begin to make judgements, to be self-reliant, to read, and to know the natural earth plus work. Emile has not learned of life or feelings yet.

Up to this point education has been for Rousseau's future natural man, not the citizen. We come into the world with rights (e.g., to be free), and then we get duties. So now Rousseau's natural man must be prepared to live in society.

Book IV is about adolescence (15-20). Now history and religion are taught Emile and history is only secondary to religion¹³ or moral education.

William Boyd wrote:

The educational scheme propounded for this stage does not differ greatly from that generally followed in the case of young men of rank everywhere in eighteenth century Europe. The main studies recommended were those pursued by most cultured people of the period, with literature and languages as the core, and Emile goes on the grand tour to learn the ways of the world and acquire the tastes of a gentleman.¹⁴

Book V completes the task of the tutor, seeing that the young man is prepared for the marriage that will make him a full member of the community.¹⁵

Giroux's writings are much more theoretical than Rousseau's, and therefore lack specific time frames when certain learning is to occur. Rousseau is actually conservative in that he believes there is a grand 'plan' to existence and the universe; while the radical although recognizing certain regularities even in child development, places more emphasis on the person becoming more the product of interaction with environmental factors. However, implicit in Giroux's work is that the ideas and methods offered should be used as early as the learner can comprehend them. Giroux criticizes some radicals for being too content-oriented and others for being too strategy-based in terms of their teaching methodology. Giroux points out the need for a synthesis of both.

There are a number of striking differences between modern radical education and that of Rousseau's, but probably none so much as the emphasis that the radical places on history. Giroux wrote:

For we must turn to history in order to understand the traditions that have shaped our individual biographies and intersubjective relationships with other human beings.¹⁶

The radical is obsessed with ideology and attacks it head on. Rousseau did not want his young tutee to be exposed to it. The radical sees the culture of positivism (or, an ideological way of looking at things that perpetuates the present unjust status quo) as the most problematic ideological area, and it must be overcome.

Underlying the suppression of historical consciousness in the social sphere and the loss of interest in history in the sphere of schooling in the United States at the present time are the rise of science and technology and the subsequent growth of the culture of positivism.¹⁷

The positivistic assumptions are basically that: (1) the relationship of theory to practice is primarily technical; (2) that there is only one scientific method; (3) that scientific inquiry itself is value free; and (4) that knowledge is inherently neutral.¹⁸

Knowledge itself is so important to the radical argument, in that it is not objective or not just "out there". There is a dialectical notion of knowledge here. It cannot be divorced from traditions, cultural and political, that give it meaning and/or dissolve it into objecthood.¹⁹ Curriculum is not neutral! Also, what is omitted (the "hidden curriculum") is just as important as what is presented the student (the "formal curriculum"). This is how some knowledge becomes viewed as legitimate. Therefore:

In the most radical sense, knowledge should be viewed as a shared process, a mediation between teachers and students, a creative political exchange that forges commonalities and the kind of critical reflection that allows all to be seen as both teachers and learners.²⁰

Notice how the content and process are brought together in the passage cited above, but also how a bond of solidarity is also formed. Giroux credits Paulo Freire as being a practitioner of this style of education.²¹

The radical strategy of education encourages self-reflection and communicative interaction marked by dialogue, questioning and communication. Classroom encounters are structured to synthesize and demonstrate the relationship between meaning, critical thinking, and democratized classroom encounters.²²

The first task in constructing a radical pedagogy of critical thinking would focus on giving students the conceptual tools by which they could free themselves from what might be termed the tyranny of imposed meanings.²³

This is especially important because for the radical, reality is socially constructed; and to decrease exploitation, conscious awareness of the process is deemed necessary.

Students must be taught to recognize that theory and facts, the subjective and objective dimensions of learning are an inseparable part of what we define as knowledge.²⁴

This helps enable the student to make inferences, offer arguments, and develop explanations to counter oppressive authority.

The roles of teachers and students must be changed so that there is a more humanization of power and authority. "Dialogical grading" should be used so that evaluation of students by teachers is negotiated and clear, not arbitrary.²⁵

Finally, just as there is economic capital within a society, there is "cultural capital" of which education is a part and should be distributed more equally.

For the radical, pedagogy is for "both individual freedom and social reconstruction",²⁶ and it is a more practical education of the individual within the group. Radical education is not biased against females, social class, or ethnicity. Rousseau's position is more male-oriented, individual-centered, and would be greatly appreciated by those economically well off libertarian (political party) types who want no government interference in education and do not want to be taxed to support public education.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- ¹Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. Emile or on Education. (Allan Bloom, Trans.)
New York: Basic Books, 1979 (1762).
- ²Giroux, Henry A. Ideology Culture & The Process of Schooling. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981.
- ³Rousseau, op. cit. p. 37.
- ⁴Giroux, op. cit. p. 5.
- ⁵Ibid, p. 65.
- ⁶Rousseau, op. cit. p. 118.
- ⁷Dobinson, D. H. Jean-Jacques Rousseau: His thought and its relevance today. London: Methuen & Co., 1969, p. 112.
- ⁸As espoused by Prof. James Giarelli in a lecture at Rutgers University during the Summer of 1982, passim.
- ⁹Rousseau, op. cit. p. 34.
- ¹⁰Ibid, p. 62.
- ¹¹Ibid, p. 182.
- ¹²Ibid, p. 165.
- ¹³Dobinson, op. cit. p. 114.
- ¹⁴Boyd, William. The Emile of Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Selections Translated and Edited. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1963, p. 95.
- ¹⁵Ibid, p. 129.

¹⁶Giroux, op. cit. p. 57.

¹⁷Ibid, p. 40.

¹⁸Ibid, p. 117.

¹⁹Ibid, p. 53.

²⁰Ibid, p. 68.

²¹Vide Freire's Pedagogy in Process: The Letters to Guinea-Bissau.

New York: Seabury Press, 1978; and his other books.

²²Giroux, op. cit. p. 55.

²³Ibid, p. 81.

²⁴Ibid, p. 82.

²⁵Ibid, p. 84.

²⁶Ibid, p. 7.